

*His Character, Court, and
Chroniclers 303*

Its Norman arcading, Arabic pointed arches, and mosaics show the hand of craftsmen of many nations. The mosaics are as beautiful to-day as when they were made (1145-1148) and the great Byzantine Christ over the chancel is only to be matched by Venice and Monreale, An even more beautiful piece of work is the Cappella Reale or Palatina, of Palermo, which was begun in 1129 and finally consecrated in 1140. Whatever the severer beauties of northern cathedrals may be, the royal chapel remains the most gorgeous of all Western churches, a gem of colour and lightness, the highest product of that diverse and cosmopolitan civilisation over which Roger presided. Its Norman bronze and iron doors, the Saracenic arches, its floors and pillars inlaid with gorgeous mosaics, its Byzantine dome covered with Greek and Latin inscriptions, and the wooden roof of its nave adorned with curie scripts in praise of Allah and the Ifing, form an artistic unity to which Arabs and Byzantines contributed more than Latins. The sacristy and the archive are full of treasures of the period; outside the door an inscription in Greek, Arabic, and Latin tells one that here was hung the water-clock of King Roger,

but the words have outlived the
instrument*¹

This *clepsydra* was as famous in its
time as the
water-clock which Harun-al-Raschid
presented to
Charlemagne; it was apparently made
by an Arab
of Malta,

¹ Amari, *S. D. M.*, Hi, p. 684, and *B. A. S.*, H., p.
143.